

PATENT

UNITED STATES APPLICATION FOR LETTERS PATENT

for

REFLECTIVE FLASHLIGHT HOLDER

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REFLECTIVE FLASHLIGHT HOLDER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Priority is claimed to U.S. Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/413,744, titled "Reflective Flashlight Holder for Use on Pet Leashes" which
5 was filed on September 27, 2002, and is incorporated herein by reference as though set forth herein in full.

Field of the Invention

The present invention concerns a reflective flashlight holder and is particularly directed to a flashlight holder that is made substantially of fabric
10 material.

Description of the Related Art

A person walking a dog at night along city or rural streets is exposed to the increased hazards of cars and motorcycles, based primarily on the reduced ability of drivers to see such a pedestrian and dog from a reasonably safe
15 distance. Similarly, other conditions, including inclement weather, often result in reduced visibility. Bicycle riders and other pedestrians also face such increased hazards.

A number of different techniques conventionally have been used to produce accessories that allow a flashlight to be removably attached to a retractable pet leash. These conventional accessories for a retractable leash
20 typically only provide a single forward-facing light source, thereby significantly limiting their usefulness. In addition, such conventional accessories often are expensive to manufacture and fairly limited in how they may be used.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

25 The present invention addresses these problems by providing an apparatus that both provides for removably attaching a flashlight as an active light source and also has a reflective surface, thereby significantly increasing visibility at night and in other inclement conditions.

Thus, in one aspect the invention is directed to a reflective flashlight
30 holder, made from an elongated strip of elastic fabric material, having reflective

material on its outer surface substantially along its entire length. In one representative embodiment, a strip of reflective material is laminated along the center of the strip of elastic fabric material. Attachment means (e.g., Velcro) on each end of the elongated strip may be attached to each other, and between its
5 ends, the elongated strip is sewn so as to form a loop. Preferably, such loop is sized so as to accommodate a penlight flashlight. It is also preferred that the elongated strip of fabric material is sized to wrap around an entire vertical mid-section of an ordinary retractable leash.

Generally speaking, the present invention may be used for attachment of
10 a flashlight to the housing of a conventional retractable leash. However, an apparatus according to the present invention may be used in a wide variety of other applications, as well. For ease of discussion, in many instances the disclosure herein refers to the preferred application in which the apparatus of the present invention attaches to such a conventional retractable leash.

The structure of the apparatus according to the preferred embodiments of
15 the invention positions a flashlight in a forward facing direction, thereby allowing increased visibility by the pedestrian and increased awareness of the pedestrian by drivers of approaching vehicles. One element of the apparatus is a reflective device which may, for example, be positioned along the vertical mid-section of a
20 retractable leash. In this embodiment, because the pedestrian naturally holds the retractable leash in a slightly downward position, the reflective device is visible by oncoming vehicles, vehicles approaching from behind the pedestrian, and vehicles approaching from either side, as when the pedestrian is walking a dog across a street. In any event, the reflective device according to the present
25 invention often can increase the visibility of a pedestrian in reduced ambient light when approached by the headlights of vehicles.

Unique to the apparatus is the reflective device and flashlight holder. Devices only providing for a flashlight mount and no reflective properties along the mid-section of the retractable leash forces the pedestrian to gain attention of
30 the drivers of the approaching vehicles by shining a flashlight at them, potentially leading to an accident through such an active distraction. The reflective device provides a more passive means for gaining the attention of approaching drivers, while the flashlight is reserved for the pedestrian's own increased visibility, or for signaling distant drivers.

The foregoing summary is intended merely to provide a brief description of the general nature of the invention. A more complete understanding of the invention can be obtained by referring to the claims and the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments in connection with the accompanying
5 figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a top perspective view of a reflective flashlight holder according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a bottom perspective view of the reflective flashlight holder
10 shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a front perspective view of a flashlight holder according to the present invention attached to the housing of a retractable leash.

Figure 4 is a perspective view of an adapter ring according to a preferred embodiment of the invention.

15 DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT(S)

A reflective flashlight holder **10** according to the present invention is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. As shown, flashlight holder **10** is formed in substantial part from a single strip **12** of elastic material having reflective material **14** extending along the entire length of at least one of its sides. In the present
20 embodiment, reflective material **14** is laminated as a strip along the center line of strip **12**. In addition, strip **12** has a patch of Velcro™ **16** and **18** at each of its ends, and is sewn so as to form a loop **20** which may accommodate a flashlight. The flashlight holder **10** may be assembled from the following components:

- 14 inch (L) x 2 inch (W) elastic strip **12** with a ¾ inch width of
25 reflective material **14** laminated along the full length
- 2 inch (L) x 2 inch (W) loop Velcro™ (hook and loop type fastener)
16
- 1½ inch (L) x 2 inch (W) hook Velcro™ (hook and loop type
fastener) **18**
- 30 · ½ inch button of adhesive hook Velcro™ (hook and loop type
fastener)

Starting with these components, flashlight holder **10** may be assembled in the following manner:

1. Lay out the 14 inch x 2 inch length of elastic strip **12** with the reflective material **14** side facing downward.
- 5 2. Select an end and stitch the 2 inch x 2 inch loop Velcro (hook and loop type fasteners) **16**, leaving approximately a 1/8 inch tab of elastic **17** at what is now termed the long member.
3. Turn over the elastic strip **12** with the reflective material **14** side facing upward and select the opposite end at what is now termed the short member.
- 10 4. Stitch the 1½ inch hook Velcro (hook and loop type fastener) **18** onto the short member from the bottom of the side edge to the top edge, across the top edge and down the other side edge. Stop and cut the thread, leaving the bottom edge **22** of the Velcro (hook and loop type fastener) **18** unsewn.
- 15 5. Fold the short member with the reflective material **14** side on the inside of the fold at the 2½ inch mark.
6. Sandwich the hook Velcro (hook and loop type fastener) **18** between the folded elastic material **12** flush to the end edge of the short member.
- 20 7. Double-stitch at the 1 1/8 inch mark across the folded elastic material **12** to include the hook Velcro (hook and loop type fastener) **18** unsewn edge **22**. This finishes the short member and creates the loop **20** that receives the flashlight.
8. The final product **10** should have a long member of approximately
- 25 10 inches in length with the loop Velcro **16** and an end edge with a 1/8 inch tab **17** of elastic material **12**, a short member of 1½ inches in length with the hook Velcro (hook and loop type fastener) **18** and a flush end edge **24**, and a loop **20**, having used 2 inches of the elastic material **12** to secure the hook Velcro (hook and loop type fastener) **18** by 1/8 inch for a finished loop using 1 7/8 inches of
- 30 the elastic material **12**.

The use of flashlight holder **10** according to a representative application of the present invention will now be described with reference to Figure 3. In this application, flashlight holder **10** is attached to a retractable leash housing **40** by wrapping flashlight holder **10** around housing **40** with the reflective material **14**

facing outwardly. Then, the Velcro strip **16** is pressed onto the Velcro strip **18** in order to secure flashlight holder **10** around housing **40**.

A complimentary flashlight **42** is placed within the loop **20** designed to receive it. If necessary, an adapter ring **50** (as shown in Figure 4) may be used to ensure that the flashlight is adequately secured within loop **20**. This may be desirable if loop **20** is sized to accommodate a flashlight **42** that uses AA batteries and the user wishes to insert a flashlight **42** that uses AAA batteries into loop **20**. In this case, the adapter ring **50** is first inserted into loop **20** and then the flashlight **42** is placed within adapter ring **50**.

Preferably, adapter ring **50** is a loop of elastic material and, more preferably, is the identical material from which elastic strip **12** is made. Accordingly, simply taking a short segment of such material and sewing its ends together may produce adapter ring **50**. In any event, ring **50** preferably has the same width as elastic strip **12**.

If adapter ring **50** is not being used to secure the flashlight **42** within loop **20**, it may be used for other purposes. For example, adapter ring **50** may be slid over a leash itself of anything else that the user wants to make more visible.

Returning to Figure 3, the flashlight **42** and loop **20** are positioned along the bottom length of the retractable leash with the reflective side of the device facing outwardly. The loop **20** and the short member are held in place while pulling the end of the elastic long member up, over, and around the vertical mid-section of the retractable leash. The long and short members are then secured by attaching the Velcro™ (hook and loop type fastener) patches **16** and **18** together. A complimentary ½ inch hook Velcro™ (hook and loop type fastener) button also may be positioned on the bottom of the retractable leash to prevent rotation of the apparatus.

It should be understood that flashlight holder **10** may instead be applied to a wide variety of other devices and articles, including bicycles, purses, a wearer's arm, and the like.

Although the present invention has been described in detail with regard to the exemplary embodiment thereof and accompanying drawings, it should be apparent to those skilled in the art that various adaptations and modifications of the present invention may be accomplished without departing from the spirit and the scope of the invention. Accordingly, the invention is not limited to the precise

embodiments shown in the drawings and described above. Rather, it is intended that all such variations not departing from the spirit of the invention be considered as within the scope thereof as limited solely by the claims appended hereto.